

PAPER 2: ON WHITE LION CONSERVATION, CULTURE AND HERITAGE

PRESENTATION TO THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON LAND AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS
A COMMITTEE OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES
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White Lion Heritage Value

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Introduction

The objectives of the Global White Lion Protection Trust ("the Trust") align with the conservation guidelines outlined in the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA). The Act offers important principles for regulating activities involving large predators, such as the White Lions. It states clearly that decisions around conservation must take into account **the interests, needs and values of all interested and affected parties**. This includes recognising all forms of **indigenous knowledge, including traditional and ordinary knowledge of surrounding communities**.

The Economy of Hunting Compared to Eco-Tourism

It has been argued - no more strongly than by those in the hunting industry that trophy hunting is significant to the economy. It is also argued that trophy hunting has potential as a poverty relief measure as it often takes place in poor rural areas. However, recreational hunting practices benefit limited stakeholder groups - mostly local and international hunters, captive breeders and their direct employees. Rural communities typically have limited access to the financial outcomes of this industry -

particularly in view of land ownership and the ownership and usage of game. According to the 2005 IFAW Report¹, in August of that year, a document was presented to the Panel of Experts on Hunting by representatives of **communities in eight provinces**. This document suggests that trophy hunting is at present an “old boys club” and that disadvantaged communities do not derive much benefit from it.

In addition, in October of 2005 a study on the recreational hunting industry (by Patterson and Khosa²), was presented to the Panel of Experts on Hunting. Their study shows that consumptive uses of game (i.e. recreational trophy hunting) do not necessarily perform better than non-consumptive uses (i.e. eco-tourism). They cite as an example a habituated leopard in Londolozi Game Reserve which is estimated to be worth USD50 000 per year to the reserve in ecotourism earnings. This is much more than would have been obtained for the leopard if hunted.

Similarly, the rare black leopard in the Lydenberg area has been referred to by the Mpumulanga Parksboard as **a rare mutation with significant scientific importance that should have a large impact on the tourism industry in the area** (Chris Nel 20 January 2006). In 2002, the Development Bank of South Africa offered a grant of R150 000 for the launch of a development programme to ensure the conservation of this rare animal. They recognised that the conservation of the black leopard would provide a considerable tourism draw-card for the region.

¹ Titled: "Review of Legal Framework Governing Captive Breeding and Hunting of Large Predators in South Africa " - prepared for the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), 14 November 2005)

² Patterson, C and Khosa, P *Background Research Paper: A status quo study on the profession and recreational hunting industry in South Africa*, Paper prepared for the Panel of Experts on Hunting October 2005 at p. 1

A study published in Africa Geographic 2002³ compares the revenue generation and potential job creation potential of a typical hunting concession with that of a typical photographic safari concession in Botswana - *Please see the Slide Presentation titled: White Lion Conservation Project for additional detail from this study:* The comparison highlights the following:

1. An average hunting concession operates for approximately **6 months** per year. On average, a typical photographic safari concession operates **12 months** a year;
2. An average hunting concession attracts approximately **30 guests** per year. On average, a typical photographic safari concession, attracts approximately **2600 guests** per year;
3. An average hunting concession sells approximately **400 bed-nights** per year. On average, a typical photographic safari concession sells approximately **6000 bed-nights** per year;
4. An average hunting concession generates approximately **\$450 000 per year**. On average, a typical photographic safari concession generates approximately **\$1.5 million per year**;

Note: Whereas income would be fairly similar between the two types of concessions if the hunting concession were to operate for 12 months in a year, it is important to observe where monies typically **flow to**:

5. An average hunting concession employs approximately **12 people for 6 months** and **2 people for 12 months**. On average, a typical photographic safari concession employs approximately **76 people for 12 months**.
6. Average wages for the hunting concession total approximately **US\$14 170 per year** (averaging **\$4.80 per day**) while total wages for a typical

³ Africa Geographic: "To Snap or Snipe" by Ian Michler, Volume 10, No 9; October 2002

photographic safari concession totals approximately **US\$174 400 per year** (averaging **\$6.40 per day**).

A Commitment to the Conservation Economy

White Lions occur naturally in one place only on earth. The Greater Timbavati region of South Africa. Our research shows that White Lions are endemic to the region **and that they occurred there naturally - integrated into tawny prides - prior to human interference in their fragile eco-system**. We, the representatives of the Global White Lion Protection Trust have pledged **our time, our skills and our competencies, our financial resources and our professional networks**, both to **protect** the White Lions and to **preserve** the cultural heritage of the rural communities that hold them sacred. These communities can benefit economically from the broader eco-tourism activities that the **"living" presence of the White Lions** can bring to the region.

Several community projects can be integrated under the banner of a White Lion Eco-Tourism project. In partnership with Open Africa, for instance, we have initiated an eco cultural tourist route through White Lion territory. We have a long-standing association - and a Memorandum of Understanding - with Open Africa, the NGO which works closely with the Dept of Environmental Affairs and Tourism in opening up eco and cultural tourism routes to low-income areas.

It is anticipated that the surrounding rural community will benefit directly - economically - from the eco-cultural tourism activities of the project. One of the "big 5" audit houses in South Africa will act as our transaction advisory partner to establish a community buy-in process through a Public Private Partnership (PPP). Through this vehicle, the community will hold a major stake in the eco-tourism trade

of the White Lion project. We anticipate that community members will, moreover, be trained and employed within the hospitality services, anti-poaching and security services as well as the construction of visitor sites along the route. A craft development project, managed through a craft training partner organisation, Khumbulani Craft (affiliated to the Siyazisiza Trust) will help to establish an initial economic foundation from which the community can build. Once the crafting community is organised into self-sustaining craft business units, a secondary level of product development and micro-finance assistance will be introduced to grow independently self-sustaining businesses. Also part of this vision is a basic humanitarian programme, consisting of organic food-growth models and primary healthcare education through international partner organisations. Currently, we work with an US based AIDS relief NGO, Corelight.

Preserving a Living Heritage

The Global White Lion Protection Trust, moreover, aims to expand its current 1000 hectare conservancy through the participation of conservation minded land-owners in the region. This founding conservation area is strategically located within the White Lions' endemic range and borders directly with three large private nature reserves. This offers the potential to drop fences and to create a consolidated protected area. It is our stated intention to have the conservancy area declared a provincial, national - and - indeed - a world heritage site. We have, over the past four years, pursued Sacred Site Status. This is an international accreditation by the IUCN. Locally, we have oral records from African elders - such as that of Credo Mutwa and Swazi Elder, Baba Mataba declaring the White Lion's natural kingdom a sacred site. Linda Tucker is on the Task Team of the IUCN Sacred Site Advisory Panel.

In this regard, we have already engaged the South African Heritage Resource Agency (SAHRA) for guidance and assistance. Member(s) of SAHRA are in attendance here today.

The White Lions, which are unique to the biodiversity of the Timbavati region, represent a valuable and irreplaceable natural heritage. Our generation has a moral responsibility to act as a trustee of this cultural and natural legacy for succeeding generations. Indeed, conservation of the White Lions is in the interest of all South Africans. Our conservation project thus aims to preserve these rare and endangered animals in their endemic habitat and to recover the cultural interest associated with the White Lions in the region in a way that involves rural communities in practical and economically sustainable ways.

Our conservation efforts are underpinned by ongoing scientific and cultural research. Our studies, which draw strong links with the history of local indigenous cultural groups - will contribute to the understanding of South Africa's natural heritage in the region. The historical value pertains to the natural, cultural, social and spiritual understanding of the White Lions' importance in the area. Our inter-disciplinary research and development team has collated and archived precise documentation in the form of scientific reports, photographs and film footage to record the growth and development of the White Lion reintroduction project and also the special cultural significance of the White Lions to the peoples of the region. We have gathered much evidence of the cultural importance of the White Lions, particularly through our educational programmes, the collation of indigenous story-telling records and community participation in numerous heritage events. On Heritage day 2007, for instance we were joined by the Mayor of Maruleng and a director of the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism as we celebrated Heritage day with the local community. The White Lions served as central theme and icon of celebration. The

event was filmed by local film production house, Aquavision, as part of a wildlife documentary commissioned by National Geographic. The National Geographic documentary covers both the natural conservation aspects as well as the cultural importance of the White Lions in the region for screening to a world-wide audience.

The White Lion scientific Reintroduction Project is currently closed to the general public, given the importance of maintaining strict access protocols to prevent human imprinting of the White Lions in the wild. However, once heritage status has been established for the White Lion conservancy, a Heritage Visitor Centre will be constructed for general public access. The Visitor Centre will include a sanctuary for rescued White Lions that cannot be reintroduced back into the wild. This sanctuary will be part-owned and managed by the community itself. The visiting public will be able to reconnect with the White Lions in their natural endemic habitat.

In addition, the Visitor Centre will include a scientific library and research centre and a cultural library of indigenous story telling records. To date, the White Lion Trust has engaged CONTRALESA in calling for indigenous story telling records to include in its archives. This is already in process.

The Trust runs a parallel cultural programme with local schools in the region using arts and theatre to reconnect the youth with their cultural heritage. To date two schools from our rural community have been trained to produce 'conservation drama', which interprets the critical issues associated with White Lion conservation. The schools perform at surrounding lodges and villages and also perform for foreign visitors and learner groups visiting from outlying schools. (***One of our learner groups presented their "White Lion - Madiba" play to Dr Nelson Mandela in July 2007***)

We are currently setting up a Heritage Committee, with representatives from our local rural community, the Maruleng Municipality, regional government, and representatives from the private sector who have a genuine interest in developing eco-tourism in the region. We will continue to work with the South African Heritage Resource Agency and other relevant agencies in the region to promote the vision of a national heritage site and sustainable eco-tourism project.

We continue to pledge our financial and intellectual resources to this project of great regional and national importance - both from a **scientific conservation** perspective and a **community development and heritage** perspective. We request that the South African Government guides and supports us in the protection of the critically endangered White Lions of the Timbavati. Assist us also in the establishment of holistic, sustainable economic and cultural growth models, which will attract increased inter-provincial and international eco-tourism trade in the region.

Our approach is ambitious in the short term, but achievable in the long term given our partnership strategy, our competency framework and the support of the South African Government. This vision offers a unique opportunity for skills upliftment in the region and a vehicle through which rural communities can empower themselves - sustainably. They can do so by combining three key areas of sustainable development **1) the conservation of a natural, living heritage, 2) the re-valuation and the preservation of a culture and 3) responsible eco-tourism that benefits "the many".**

It is all our responsibility to give our silent stakeholders a voice. Thank you for hearing us today.